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(CENSORSHIP-CIA) RELEASE AT 6:30 P.M.

WASHINGTON (UPI) - CIA PRIOR CENSORSHIP OF BOOKS WRITTEN BY FORMER AGENTS IS "ERRATIC, UNRELIABLE AND ARBITRARY" AND CARRIED OUT SELECTIVELY AGAINST AGENCY CRITICS, A RESEARCH GROUP SAID TODAY.

THE CENTER FOR NATIONAL SECURITY STUDIES SAID CONGRESS SHOULD NOT LET STAND THE SUPREME COURT'S DECISION UPHOLDING THE CIA'S RIGHT TO CONFISCATE THE ROYALTIES OF A FORMER INTELLIGENCE OFFICIAL WHO DEFIED HIS AGENCY OATH NOT TO PUBLISH ANYTHING WITHOUT CIA APPROVAL.

THE CASE OF EX-INTELLIGENCE OFFICIAL FRANK SNEPP, WHO WROTE OF HIS EXPERIENCES IN VIETNAM, WAS REVIEWED IN THE JUNE ISSUE OF FIRST PRINCIPLES, THE CENTER'S MONTHLY PUBLICATION. SNEPP WROTE IN HIS BOOK THAT THE AGENCY PERFORMED POORLY IN VIETNAM AND ABANDONED ITS AGENTS THERE DURING THE FINAL AMERICAN EVACUATION.

"THE CIA'S PRIOR REVIEW SYSTEM IS ERRATIC, UNRELIABLE AND ARBITRARY AND IS SELECTIVELY APPLIED TO THE WRITINGS OF AGENCY CRITICS WHILE FAILING TO TAKE ACTION AGAINST THE WORK OF SUPPORTIVE FORMER EMPLOYEES" THE CENTER SAID.

NOTING THE SUPREME COURT HAD DENIED A PETITION BY SNEPP'S LAWYER FOR A REHEARING OF THE CASE, THE CENTER SAID IT WAS NOW UP TO CONGRESS TO LEGISLATE CHANGES.

REFERRING TO THE SNEPP APPEAL, THE CENTER SAID, "SERIOUS SEPARATION OF POWERS ISSUES ARE RAISED BECAUSE CONGRESS HAS NOT LEGISLATED THE SYSTEM OF PRIOR RESTRAINT AND THE PENALTIES WHICH THE COURT HAS IMPOSED."

IT ADDED:

"CAN THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE, WITHOUT EXPLICIT STATUTORY AUTHORITY, IMPOSE A JUDICIALLY ENFORCEABLE REQUIREMENT OF PREPUBLICATION REVIEW AS A CONDITION OF EMPLOYMENT FOR THE AGENCY?"

"A SYSTEM WHICH PLACES THE POWER OF CENSORSHIP IN THE HANDS OF THOSE WHO MAY BE CRITICIZED AND EMBARRASSED BY PUBLICATION, AND ONE WHICH APPLIES ONLY TO WRITING AND NOT TO SPEAKING MAY BE CONSTITUTIONALLY UNPERMISSIBLE."

THE CENTER IS JOINTLY SPONSORED BY THE FUND FOR PEACE AND THE AMERICAN CIVIL LIBERTIES UNION, BOTH OF WHICH HAVE BEEN CRITICAL OF CIA ACTIVITIES.

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